

# AMAA News



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The Armenian Evangelical Church of Sydney, Australia.

# A Reformation for Denominations: The Future of the Church

by Carnegie Samuel Calian\*



This is an exciting time to be in ministry. We are at a crossroads, deciding whether to fuss further with old wineskins or discard them for the new (Mark 2:18-22). For many, these new wineskins are seen in the vitality of parachurch ministries — Promise Keepers, Navigators, Young Life, Campus Crusade, and InterVarsity. Others find new wineskins in the much publicized megachurches, often referred to as full-service churches and recently heralded in the *Atlantic Monthly* as "The Next Church." Perhaps the best known of these is the Willow Creek Church in Barrington, Illinois, where more than 20,000 people regularly attend services; a budget of 15 million dollars includes the salaries of the church's 192 full-time employees. There are approximately 400 megachurches in the United States today; and more recently the Willow Creek Association has been formed with 1,400 churches in North America to teach and promote the "Willow Creek principles" in their own neighborhoods and regions. According to the *Atlantic Monthly* article, "Half of all church-going Americans to cite a figure treasured in the Next Church community, are attending only 12 percent of the nation's 400,000 churches. To look at it in another way, half of American Protestant churches have fewer than seventy-five congregants" (August 1996).

What the church will be like in 2050 is still unknown; but we need to ask whether the "brand name" mainline denominations — such as Methodists, Reformed, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Baptists, United Church of Christ, Disciples, and Presbyterians — will become a shadow of their former selves. The present decline casts a doubtful future for denominations and I suspect creates anxiety for younger seminarians who represent

these denominations. We can't take the next generation or two for granted; we ought to have learned that lesson from the generation of "boomers" and "busters," some of whom are beginning to find the megachurches appealing. Actually, we should all be concerned and troubled over the current trends as we enter the digital world (cf. Nicholas Negroponte, *Being Digital*, 1995) of the twenty-first century. We need leadership that has the courage, smarts, and necessary commitment to lead Christ's church into the next century, not simply institutional maintenance keepers. We seek future leaders among the clergy and the laity who have a keen desire to make a difference and who have the capacity to act on what's at stake the demise or vitality of our ecclesial institutions.

Many questions bear down upon us. Is the core mission of the church worth preserving? What "holy gamble" should these mainline churches make with their limited resources if they wish to be significant players in the next century? Are we defending the status quo out of fear of the unknown? Will we go on trying to do things right, but fail to do the right thing? How inviting will our houses of worship be for those born after 1990 who may or may not wish to identify with the Christian church in the next century?

Seminary communities are not safe havens from the turmoil and confusion felt at the grassroots; seminaries and churches are connected institutions that need to support and assist one another in articulating the Gospel message. To what extent is theological education as currently practiced sensitive to the present stresses confronting local churches? Are we in the seminaries willing to participate meaningfully and relevantly in educating leadership for the church in the next century? Or is the present curriculum simply a projection of faculty interest and needs?

## Stormy Seas

Some of us might sigh with relief that we won't be around in 2050; perhaps we can hold out — grasping for that invisible contract we signed in our psyche in which the church promised not to abandon us, regardless of how many changes there were, if we in turn were faithful. Did we not expect the church to provide a measure of stability in our lives? Yet, not of us can escape the reality of change; even death is a changing event that awaits each of us. The big question is whether churches and related institutions can master dynamic continuity while sailing on stormy seas of change.

The only way to address change is to face it with a forming spirit, to be led by the winds of the Spirit into unknown territory, and to take a risk for the Kingdom. We can't afford to harbor illusions that churches or seminaries are bastions of safety against forces of change. To maintain such an attitude is to become obsolete; heaven knows, we already have too much concrete dedicated to God in our present buildings. As never before, we need to justify our actions not only to ourselves but to a society that craves spirituality largely outside of the church.

How then would we go about establishing an ideal church for the next century, one that is theologically and biblically sound, caring and nurturing, socially relevant and electronically connected? We need to develop a new mindset and to imagine each of our existing churches (in spite of present circumstances and restrictions) as new church developments. Each new church development must see itself first and foremost as a Christian witness in a pluralistic neighborhood and commit itself to the unchurched, many of whom are no doubt indifferent or suspicious of the church, having largely dismissed its relevance in their youth. This new mindset could liberate us from present inertia and feeling of despair.

How then would we go about establishing an ideal seminary? We need to do a number of things: be clear as to why we exist and for what we stand; transfer the core of our beliefs and values into new wineskins, seeking to preserve the best of our proud heritage and humbly looking to the future; and create an atmosphere of some security with a growing appreciation and trust for one another, a necessary premise for genuine communication in any organization. In such

an atmosphere, we should consider zero-based curriculum planning — where every course and teaching method would need to be justified; and we should be prepared to deal with the struggle over turf among colleagues. Seminaries could model for the churches the dialogical attitude needed in facing the critical issues that will have surfaced in the next century.

## Analysis or Synthesis

How do we envision the ideal church and seminary? Most of our thinking is analytical, pointing to structures and asking, How does it work? The analytical method breaks the whole down into minute parts for examination and change to improve efficiency. It enables us to do things right. However, *doing things right may be the wrong approach!* That may sound paradoxical, yet, I'm afraid that it is what has happened in the attempts to reorganize the Presbyterian Church (USA) that I have witnessed since 1958 when I was ordained. I suspect the same might be said of other mainline denominations. We have been too analytical! The analytic approach is geared to research and solving a problem, examining and correcting the parts that lead to the whole. Analytical thinking is detail oriented, but for the most part it does not envision adequately the big picture.

On the other hand, synthetic or systemic thinking is occupied with function rather than structure, with dissolving messes, and with the role of the part within the whole. Synthetic thinking seeks understanding rather than knowledge. It aims for effectiveness; *doing the right thing rather than doing things right.* It is primarily design oriented rather than detail oriented. It looks to the whole (the ideal church or seminary) and then to the appropriation of the necessary parts that would enable us to function at our best. Synthetic thinking, for instance, would beckon us to envision the Kingdom of God and then to proceed toward that end under the Spirit's guidance.

I was introduced to this way of thinking recently as a participant at an invitational workshop sponsored by the Tallberg Foundation under the theme "Preparing for the 21st Century: Leadership in an Age of Learning." Professor Russell L. Ackoff of the University of Pennsylvania stimulated us to go beyond analysis and to employ a systems approach as we prepare ourselves

for the challenges of the next century. (cf. Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Organization*, 1994). The challenge I received from the Tallberg workshop can be summed up in a quote from Albert Einstein, who said, "We cannot solve the problems we have created with the same thinking that created them." We might modify his quote slightly and say for our purposes: we are unable to solve the problems we have created with the same theologizing and church practices that have created them.

Recently, a mainline pastor shared with me his concern about ministry. He admitted that he couldn't wait to retire.

"Why?" I asked. "You are only 50 years of age and have at least 15 years of active ministry before you."

He replied, "I'm not alone in my feelings; there are a number of my colleagues who feel the same way. We don't want to 'rock the boat' any longer, the ship is clearly too fragile. At the same time, I no longer feel I can exercise my freedom in Christ before the congregation. I find myself simply offering churchgoers what they want to hear and that keeps me out of trouble."

How can we respond to this pastor suffering from fatigue and loss of purpose? His personal, unwritten contract for ministry was to bring prophetic renewal to the church. Finding the old wineskin inadequate and beyond repair, he is afraid to divorce himself from it. He finds himself increasingly alone in an urban wasteland where street signs are torn down and where spotlights are no longer dependable. The present flow of traffic and noise in and out of the church no longer makes sense to him. The paradigm has shifted, and he is nostalgic for an earlier one and is still grasping tightly in his hand that invisible contract he made when he accepted his call to ministry.

How many parishioners are there in the pews today who have similar feelings and have "dropped out" or have taken "early retirement" from church life for a number of personal reasons? An active churchwoman told me recently that she took a "sabbatical" from church for several months and was surprised with the realization that she didn't miss it. Is she on the way to becoming another church dropout? My hope is that neither this pastor nor parishioner will give up on the church, but discover a systemic way of thinking and thereby implement steps toward an ideal church. Working in small in-

crements we can behold in time something new and exciting formed by the grace of God and through the guidance of the Spirit. As we work then to fulfill the ideal, we can celebrate each step of progress to the glory of God. Don't for a moment think that this synthetic process is easy; it takes hard work and a constant empowerment through prayer.

## Toward the Community of God

I believe we can begin a new reformation for denominations if we are willing to shed the old wineskin and to begin stitching a new one together. Working toward the ideal institution (church or seminary) will take us beyond our fragmented theologies and present skirmishes. Thinking more holistically and synthetically and operating with a spirit of discipleship and discipline, we can begin to incarnate the characteristics of the community of God. I offer the following twelve characteristics as pieces of the new wineskin; as a standard by which we can judge ourselves; as a stimulus to act; and as a vision, however imperfect, of the community that embodies:

1) *Wholeness and coherence within diversity.* Such a community will have a greater capacity to accept and renew itself in a swiftly changing world.

2) *Forgiveness and acceptance.* Bonded through its confessions and struggles and inspired by our sacraments and stories, this community will push on for a deeper unity through Christ.

3) *Shared values and a willingness to stand up for them amid the ambiguities in society.* As John Gardner, founder of Common Cause, has written, "Individuals have a role in the continuous rebuilding of the value framework, and the best thing that they can do is not to preach values but to exemplify them. Teach the truth by living it. All of us celebrate our values in our behavior. It is the universal ministry. The way we act and conduct our lives is saying something to others — perhaps something reprehensible, perhaps something encouraging" (*Guilding Community*, 17).

4) *Care, trust, and teamwork.* Reality resides in authentic relationships. This community will not avoid conflict, but will work toward constructive outcomes in disagreements.

5) *Attentiveness.* People in this commu-

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## AMAA Executive Director Visits Australia

Rev. Movses B. Janbazian, Executive Director of the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) submitted to the AMAA Board of Directors the following report about his visit to Australia from April 23 to May 3, 1999.

This was my first mission field trip to Australia. The purpose of the trip was to visit and have personal fellowship with the leaders and members of the local Armenian Evangelical community, and to learn more about their church life, witness, needs and hopes.

Australia is a "Western Democracy" occupying an entire continent far from the Western World. The official language (English) and the lifestyle of its inhabitants reflects its mainly Western origin, but the population of the country (more than 19 million) represent a multi-cultural society. Forty percent of the Australians are immigrants or first-generation children of immigrants. East Asian countries are providing the majority of the new settlers in Australia. Only 1.5% of the population is of Aboriginal background.

The Armenian Community numbers about 30,000, settled mainly in Sydney and Melbourne. Pockets of Armenians are found in Perth, Adelaide and other cities. Armenians were present in Australia as early as 1930, but the community came into existence in the early 1960's, after the influx of immigrants from Egypt, Syria, Iran and Lebanon. Few are from Armenia. Due to recent stringent immigration laws, no significant number of immigrants are currently let into the country. The Armenian community represents one of the lively local ethnic minority groups. Besides the government-supported Armenian radio program, there are three weekly radio programs and a one-hour TV pro-

**Rev. & Mrs. Janbazian with Rev. Krikor Youmoushakian (2nd from left) and the deacons and council members of the Armenian Evangelical Church of Sydney (above). Members of the women's Bible Study Group (middle), and the Young Adults group (bottom) of the Armenian Evangelical Church of Sydney.**

### A Reformation (Continued from page 3)

nity will listen carefully to one another and appreciate one another's passions and life histories.

6) *Engagement and participation.* With everyone playing a role, this community will enhance self-esteem and a sense of belonging.

7) *Affirmation.*

8) *Play and celebration.*

9) *All ages.* Especially the youth will be welcome in this community, and the elderly will be embraced.

10) *Networking.* Never losing sight of its

unique mission and purpose in society, this community will form relationships with a wide range of organizations.

11) *Gratitude.* This community will not take its own mission and direction for granted, and at the same time it will stand open to the future.

12) *Sanctuary.* In such a community, people will uphold one another in prayer as they take mutual responsibility for each person's daily walk in faith. It will be a safe place where people's thoughts, doubts, and

feelings can be expressed.

We are called to be the community of love, created by the triune God whose essence is the emboiement of love within a divine community. Reaching the Kingdom of God is nothing less than entering this Community of God, a perfect fellowship of oneness, more beautiful than we can ever imagine (see John 17). Let us dare to discard old wineskins, discovering and embracing new ones to lead us onward to the promised Kingdom of God in this next century. □



gram. There are one monthly, one weekly and one bimonthly Armenian publications. A number of cultural and patriotic organizations are active in the community. There are three schools: St. Gregory Armenian School (280 students), founded and operated by the local Armenian Catholic priest, Father Andon Tutunjian; A. & S. Galstaun Armenian High School (340 students) with Mr. V. Karamian as principal; and the AGBU's Alexander Armenian School (50 students) with Mrs. Laura Artinian as director. There are also three Saturday Armenian schools with a combined student body of 180 or more. The community also has an old age home, the Alexander Nursing Home of Sydney.

The Armenian Evangelical Church of Sydney has fifty or more families. It was founded in 1966. In 1969 several members left the church and founded the Armenian Brethren Church of Sydney. In 1973, the AMAA sent Rev. Bernard Guekguezian to Sydney to reorganize the congregation. Upon his recommendation, the Church was affiliated with the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA). In 1976, another group left the congregation and founded the Armenian Brotherhood Church. In 1987, yet another group separated and established the Armenian Nazarene Church of Sydney. In 1986, UCA offered an old church building to the church. In 1995 the church demolished the old building, and with the help of the AMAA built its current beautiful sanctuary, which was dedicated in November, 1996. The following have served as the pastors of the Church: Brother Khachig Khachigian (1966-75); Rev. Hovhannes Keveryekian (1975-80); Rev. Avedis Philibosian (1980-85); Rev. Hovhannes Karjian (1988-90); Rev. Herald Hassessian (1990-93). The current pastor is Rev. Krikor Youmoushakian, who has been ministering to the Church since 1993. Regular weekly activities of the church include: Sunday worship service with 60 or more in attendance; Sunday School with 30 students; Christian Endeavor Youth meetings; adolescents' meetings; prayer meetings at homes; women's weekly meetings. The congregation has a significant number of young couples with children. Professionals are few. Most are in commerce. Some are owners of successful business ventures. The language used in the church is Armenian. However, children use English when talking with one another.



**Rev. Janbazian with (clockwise) new AMAA Life Members, Hovhaness and Azadouhie Soghomonian and Barkey and Maggi Ishkhanian; the Stepan Stepanian family, one of the founding families of the Armenian Evangelical Church of Sydney; the extended family members of Mr. & Mrs. Sarkis and Lucy Aroyan; the children and grandchildren of the Soghomonian brothers (Garo, Hovhaness, Hagop and Levon) with their grand and great-grand mother, Mrs. Arousiag Soghomonian (sitting at the center).**

I squeezed in a range of activities in my 8 days in Australia:

- Preaching on Sunday April 25 (Armenian Genocide Commemoration, with more than 90 worshippers);
- Interviews with the Armenian section of the Special Broadcasting Service of Australia, the "Dziadzian" and "Voice of Karabagh" radio programs, the Armenian TV Program of Sydney's Channel 31, and

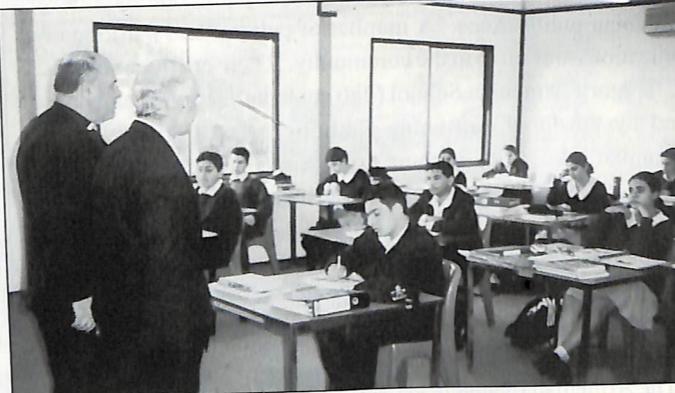
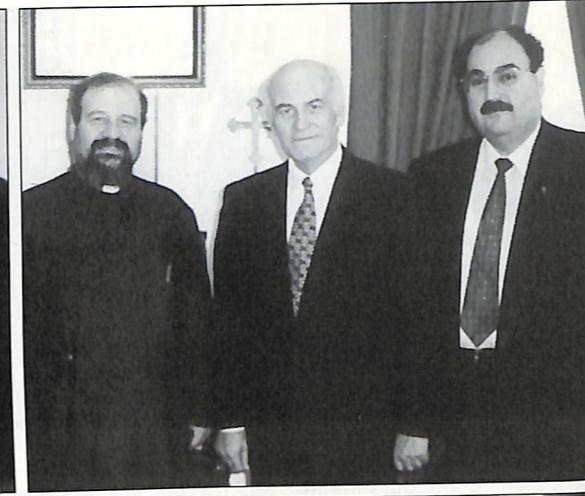


**Rev. Youmoushakian and Rev. & Mrs. Janbazian visit with (clockwise) officers of the Uniting Church in Australia; Arch. A. Baliozian; St. Gregory Armenian School students; 6th graders of the Alexander Armenian School which sponsors an orphan child in Armenia; and the principal and the officers of the Board of Trustees of A. & S. Galstaun School.**

the "Armenia" weekly publication;

- Visit to the local Armenian Schools;
- Courtesy calls on Arch. Aghan Baliozian, the Primate of the Armenian Apostolic Diocese of the Far East; Rev. Gregor Henderson, General Secretary, and other leaders of the Uniting Church in Australia;
- Meetings with the pastor and the Council of the Armenian Evangelical Church, and the leaders of the Armenian Brethren, Brotherhood and Nazarene churches;
- A two-day visit to Melbourne where there are several of my childhood friends from my native Anjar, and some Evangelical families, including my cousins;
- Speaking at a special meeting of the Young Adults group, and a meeting with the Women's bible Study Group, at which Louisa spoke; and
- Preaching at the AMAA Sunday worship service on May 2, and speaking at an after-service AMAA benefit luncheon.

The Armenian community of Australia is young and lively. However, Armenians feel isolated and cut off from other larger communities in other parts of the world. Assimilation is inevitable in the long run. The Armenian Evangelical congregation is also young. It is small, but active. The Church represents a visible and respected Armenian Evangelical presence in Sydney. The pastor of the Church, Rev. Youmoushakian, is well-liked and respected by the congregation, the Armenian community and the leadership of the Uniting Church in Australia. He is a man of vision and deep commitment. The leadership of the Church is appreciative of the AMAA's support. The AMAA is respected and supported by the congregation. Several individuals expressed interest in taking an active part in the life and work of the Association. I met with a select group of AMAA supporters who agreed to serve as the founding members of a local AMAA District Committee. The Armenian Evangelical Church of Sydney has a growing congregation. It represents a shining example of the witness and service of the Armenian Evangelical Church.□



## AMAA's Dedicated Service in Armenia

by Margaret T. Bailey

From the first moment I arrived in Armenia, I was amused by the incongruent mixture of Soviet and Western cultures. Beneath the trappings of the old Soviet style airport guard uniform, appeared a gracious sentry delighted to welcome new visitors. The Cold War may have trapped this ancient jewel behind the Iron Curtain and away from public view, but today Armenia is emerging from its communist snare. As a non-Armenian growing up in the Fresno area, I always admired the strength of the Armenian family, community and church. Now I had the opportunity to walk the historic paths of this ancient and treasured culture. Armenia is a country of political and economic pioneers blazing an uncharted course in the post-Soviet era. If there is a single ray of hope in all the former Soviet empire, it is the nation of Armenia. However, if Armenia is to rise above the legacy of Soviet doctrine, we, who have been so blessed, must commit our resources and talents on the front line of this effort.

During my brief visit to Armenia I had the privilege of meeting with individuals in government, education, and humanitarian agencies. There are many dedicated servants who have sacrificed careers and fortunes in the West in order to participate in rebuilding this glorious nation and ensuring a future of economic, political, and social stability. Among the most noteworthy endeavors I saw while in Armenia was the work of the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA). Elizabeth Agbabian, a tireless champion of the AMAA Orphan Care Project, was instrumental in introducing us to the devoted team at the AMAA's Yerevan headquarters. This dedicated Christian agency is at the forefront of selfless sacrifice in the task of underpinning the social structure that collapsed at the demise of the Soviet era. The work of the AMAA is to be highly commended. The Association is making great strides in meeting the needs of a community on many vital fronts, including: medical labs, pharmacies, dental offices,

On one occasion, our team was invited to accompany the AMAA's construction supervisor, Mike Balabanian, on a tour of several AMAA projects. This day-long journey was truly the highlight of my visit to Armenia. In that brief time I was able to view a cross-section of the many AMAA projects. We visited an orphanage, dental facilities, a medical clinic, a church, a seminary, and several construction sites. When touring the orphanage I was able to gaze into the eyes of the precious orphans and see the hope that exists, due to the ministrations of the AMAA staff and the thousands of you who donate your resources. This was truly an opportunity to catch a

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**Left to Right: Anna Syke, Elizabeth Agbabian, Eleonor Markarian (Manager of the AMAA office in Yerevan), Dr. Margaret T. Bailey and Violet Fermanian at the AMAA Center in Yerevan.**

glimpse into the heart and compassion of Christ working through the hands of the AMAA staff. But those who serve require all of our help to continue meeting basic subsistence needs and to complete the work that remains.

There are many opportunities for all of us to serve and to make a difference. A good place to start is with the AMAA. The new Armenian Center and the Point Loma Nazarene University campus in San Diego, California, is looking forward to sending small groups of college students to Yerevan to work in AMAA construction, summer camps, and missions projects. Our help is needed for the provision of materials and funds for these vitally needed programs. On a personal level, we can all sponsor an AMAA orphan for \$20 a month or \$240 a year. But if even this level of financial commitment is difficult, then a combined effort among friends and associates can be undertaken. For example, the Point Loma Nazarene University's administrative staff has taken on the challenge of sponsoring an AMAA orphan. The Point Loma Nursing Department is exploring ways to support the AMAA medical lab through donated services and

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equipment. With the dedicated and experienced AMAA staff to serve as our guide and model, Point Loma Nazarene University faculty and students look forward to many service opportunities and the fulfillment that comes from working alongside those committed to a life of self-sacrifice. I look forward to many years of association with my new AMAA friends who are the hands and heart of Christ for many children who would not otherwise know Him.

I encourage everyone to make the journey to Armenia and experience this historic period, as the nation moves forward on the path toward democratization and open markets. The whole country is alive with excitement and change. Not only is it easy to fall in love with the people, but it is very humbling to experience first hand the impact that dedicated servants, such as the AMAA workers, can have in shaping a nation. If we in the West neglect our duty to support the chil-

dren who will form the democratic foundation of the nation, then we will have failed to prepare our children and the children of Armenia for their responsibility among the community of nations, to selflessly serve and compassionately care for those caught in the throes of political upheaval. Let us not turn our backs on the plight of thousands of Armenian children struggling to survive in a prosperous global economy that will otherwise leave them behind. □

## AMAA's Child Sponsorship Program in Armenia

Directly after the devastating earthquake of 1988 in Armenia, the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) began conducting relief operations there, providing basic health & nutrition support to the victims of the disastrous natural catastrophe.

In 1991, the AMAA began a sponsorship program in order to help orphans and children of impoverished families on a regular basis. Through its Orphan/Child Care Program, created especially for relief projects in Armenia, the Association reaches out to the destitute and marginalized children of Armenia. The Association is dedicated to safeguarding the future of the children of Armenia by ensuring their survival now.

The program began with just 37 sponsored children. Over the years, due to the overwhelming response to the AMAA's appeals, the program has grown to include over 2000 orphaned and destitute children and their families. Through scheduled year-round home visits by AMAA's

relief workers, the sponsored children and their families are supplied with necessary provisions and cash. The AMAA provides basic foodstuffs, clothing, personal hygiene and health items and school supplies.

Following is a listing of some of the relief supplies which are distributed at regular intervals:

**Foodstuff** - powdered milk, flour, rice, bulgur, lentils, sugar, canned meats, salt, canned vegetables, canned soup, oil, butter, jam and pasta.

**Clothing** - sweaters, hats, socks, gloves, shoes/boots, winter coats, underwear, shirts, pants and T-shirts.

**Personal Hygiene & Health items** - soap, shampoo, laundry detergent, deodorant, combs, brushes, toothpaste, tooth brushes, children's vitamins, cough syrup, aspirin.

**School supplies** - notebooks, pencils, pens, eraser, crayons, colored pencils, rulers, writing paper, books, school bags.

The AMAA also provides special-event programs for children during Christmas/New Year and Easter holidays.

During the summer months, summer camp and Daily Vacation Bible School programs are offered.

Through the Armenian Children's Milk Fund the AMAA also provides life-saving nutrition to infants who are lactose intolerant.

In addition, under the supervision of Rev. René Léonian of Paris, France, and Mr. Harout Nercessian of Montreal, Canada, the AMAA's local staff provides social services, Christian fellowship and loving care to the orphans and families of the sponsored children.

The AMAA sponsorship program includes children in the following cities and towns of Armenia and Karabagh: **Yerevan** - 637 children; **Gumri** - 358 children; **Vanatzor** - 291 children; **Stepanavan** - 70 children; **Ardashad** - 37 children; **Spitak** - 79 children; **Ichevan** - 103 children; **Goris** - 50 children; **Talin** - 50 children; **Maralik** - 51 children; **Dilijan** - 31 children; **Arevshat** - 30 children; **Ararat** - 26 children; **Karabagh** - 241 children.

To become a sponsor, simply fill out the coupon and mail it with your check to the AMAA Orphan/Child Care Program, Armenian Missionary Association of America, Inc. 31 West Century Road, Paramus, NJ 07652. □

*I appreciate the work of the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) is doing in Armenia and Karabagh especially, for the orphans and children of needy and impoverished families.*

*I am enclosing a one-time gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to help the AMAA provide necessary assistance for orphaned and impoverished children in Armenia.*

*I would like to become a sponsor of a child in Armenia/Karabagh. Please sign me up as a sponsor of \_\_\_\_\_ child(ren) at \$240.00 per child, per year.*

*Please provide information on how to become a sponsor.*

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

## For Armenia's Children with Love

**O**n a crisp March afternoon at the Wilshire Country Club in Los Angeles, CA, 250 guests experienced a festive event on behalf of Armenia's children.

Preceding the Spring themes luncheon, guests inspected curious silent auction items and enjoyed a lively fashion show featuring local children. Michelle Shirikian introduced each child and described the costumes being modelled.

Elizabeth Agbabian, the keynote speaker, updated the attentive audience on Armenia's visible children - the abandoned, homeless and orphaned. She elaborated on the Armenian Missionary Association of America's response to this heartbreaking situation.

All of the \$60,000 raised will go directly to the AMAA's projects in Armenia, where thousands of needy children and their families receive loving care and material help.

Co-chairs of this project were Linda Kay Abdulian, Christina



**Members of the Fashion Show Benefit Event Committee.**

Jabarian and Michelle Shirikian. Committee members include: Elizabeth Agbabian, Diane Cabaloff, Gina Felikian, Mary Hovhanessian, Hermine Janoyan, Sandra Kaloemkarian, Mary Kassabian, Grace Kay, Grace Kurkjian, Joyce Stein and Savey Tufenkian. □

## PRAYER REQUESTS FOR AMAA SUMMER MINISTRIES IN ARMENIA

**Editor's Note:** The following is the most recent monthly prayer-request letter written by Mr. Harout Nercessian, the AMAA Deputy Representative in Armenia. The letter is sent to churches and individuals who are interested in Christina education ministries to Children and youth in Armenia.

### Greetings in the name of our Lord!

This is AMAA-Armenia's June '99 prayer requests, focusing on AMAA's Christian Education (CE) and summer activities in Armenia.

I want to thank our supporters for their practical assistance and prayers. Last month we had requested our supporters prayers for the recruitment of leaders and for the preparation of our summer activities. Let me give a brief update.

### Leadership Recruitment:

This is a long-term endeavor and an on-going need. God is actually raising new leaders, but we need more, especially men. We have very few men serving in our CE ministries. On a positive note, we have seen a few young men join our ministries, during the last few weeks.

### Summer Activities Preparation:

As I write this note, we are at the peak of our preparation activities. We are doing lots of administrative work, and training seminars. More than 7,500 children will participate in our summer activities. There is the need for more, but we have reached our budget limitations.

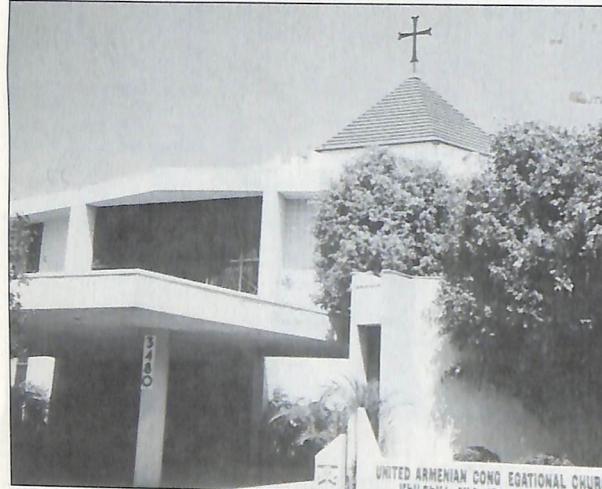
Thank you for your prayers in this area. Although the preparations are not complete, I feel we have a good handle on it. Good camp sites have been found (most of the workers have been selected, and training seminars have started. In one week, all the camp workers gather for a five-day planning and training conference. The only outstanding item is the Georgia Summer Camps. A camp site has not yet been confirmed.

Thank you again for your prayers and for your support.

In Christ's service,

**Harout Nercessian**  
AMAA Armenia, Deputy Representative

## UACC Sanctuary Dedication Service



March 21 was an important day in the life of the United Armenian Congregational Church (UACC). A special service was held to dedicate the refurbished sanctuary, which has been an ongoing project for more than a year. The celebration included an abundance of music by the Chancel Choir, the PrimeTime Children's Choir, a duet, the Handbell Choir and the Praise Music worship team. Also, the congregation joined in singing praises to God for His wonderful gift of a newly redone sanctuary. The renovation work, which cost about one million dollars, was necessitated by construction damage to the sanctuary caused

Following the service, the Board of Deacons hosted a lunch for the church family in the Paul Avazian Hall. Many individuals and committee members who had dedicated their time and effort to make the sanctuary a reality were recognized. With the completion of the renovation work, the congregation can feel most richly blessed. □

## Rev. Robert Sarkissian Awarded French Medal



**Rev. Jean Tartur, President of the Protestant Federation of France, Terese and Rev. Robert Sarkissian, Ambassador Daniel Jouanneau and his wife.**

Rev. Robert Sarkissian has served as pastor to the French Protestant Church of Beirut, Lebanon, for the past 29 years. Throughout the civil war, his church met regularly for Sunday worship and these meetings were open to people of every faith and ethnic group. Rev. Sarkissian also worked

to make the church a locus in which Muslim-Christian dialogue could take place. Due to this service, among many others, by decree of the President of the Republic of France, Rev. Sarkissian was awarded the French Ensign of Knighthood of the National Order of Merit.

The award ceremony was held in the French Ambassador's Palace in Beirut. Many local French and Armenian dignitaries were in attendance, along with members of the Lebanese parliament. The Ambassador of France, Mr. Daniel Jouanneau, spoke of Rev. Sarkissian's role as a catalyst for reconciliation between Muslims and Christians during a time of civil and national strife. The Ambassador went on to mention Rev. Sarkissian's contribution to the Karaguezian Foundation, his participation in the Armenian Evangelical Union, his work at the Center for Armenian Handicapped in Lebanon, and his role as a Board member of Haigazian University.

Rev. Sarkissian was born in 1929, in Marseilles, France. He received his Master of Divinity degree from Aix-en-Provence and served as a pastor in the Marseilles area. He visited Lebanon several times during his youth, finally settling there, with his wife Terese, in 1970. At that time, he had gone to Beirut to study Armenian for two years. When he was about to leave and return to France, he was asked to stay in Beirut and work as director of the Karaguezian Foundation (an Armenian medical and social aid institution). For the past three decades, Rev. Sarkissian and his wife, Terese, have served with unselfish devotion to their Armenian Lebanese and French communities in Beirut, where they continue their lives of loving service. □

## Rededication at Armenian Evangelical Church in Istanbul

The Armenian Evangelical Church of Gedik Pasha, located in Istanbul, Turkey, is one of the oldest Armenian Evangelical churches. Over the years, however, the church had fallen into disrepair, as neglect and lack of funds took their toll.

Last summer, however, under the leadership of Krikor Agaboglu, a preacher of the church and chairman of the renovation program, a serious effort was begun to renovate both the sanctuary and the fellowship hall of the church. Donations from members of the congregation, together with a matching grant from the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) made this work possible.

The rededication ceremony of the church's fellowship hall took place on October 23, 1998. About 300 Armenian and non-Armenian Christians from the Istanbul area were present. Among them were Hovhannes Torkomoglu, chairman of the Armenian Evangelical Church of Pera (the other Armenian Evangelical Church in Istanbul) and Rev. Jean Agopian of France, who led a delegation of 15 people representing the Armenian Evangelical churches of France.

The renovation of the sanctuary is in progress. □

## FRENCH GENTLEMEN IN NEW YORK

**Editor's Note:** The following poem was composed in French by Dr. Kegham Boyadjian and translated into English by Ms. Elizabeth Yeghiazarian. The inspiration for the poem was the 80th anniversary celebration of the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) that took place in October 1998.

How shall we forget the American sky,  
We have enjoyed very closely,  
The skyscrapers as golden stair,  
The streets and avenues full of life,  
The liberty as a present to the world,  
And the traffic busy with yellow taxis,  
Rushing under and on the Washington bridge.

We will remember the figure 80,  
Age of the AMAA, a hope for every day,  
Thanks to this old lady, always efficient  
And acting to help our weak land.

Thank you first to your elders  
Who have transformed in hope  
A troubled future, because they had  
In their heart the love of Jesus.

We will remember as stenciled in our minds

Your names and faces very keen to us:  
Andy the President, Movses the Executive,  
Vahan the gentle poet and Edward, a Frenchman his heart.

We came to visit you brothers through all these years  
Neither with Lafayette nor with Aznavour,  
Disregarding your dollars,  
Let them be dealt by Wall Street,  
But only to enjoy this unforgettable day.

We will remember the work you are doing  
In Sofia, Teheran, Brussels or Beirut, and  
Of course in Armenia. You are always looking  
for a new field to evangelize.

And in the towns of France, we pray our God  
To increase your faith, through the Holy Spirit.  
The faith that helps the poor and give hope to humanity.  
We French are amazed by the work accomplished.

## UN STUDY FINDS GAP WIDENING BETWEEN ARMENIA'S RICH AND POOR

**E**ver since its inception in the wake of the tragic earthquake of 1988 in Armenia, the Alexandria-Gumri Exchange Committee of the city of Alexandria, VA, have been organizing Annual Armenian Festivals to raise funds for humanitarian programs in

Gumri, Armenia. This year's festival took place on Saturday, May 15, 1999, and featured Armenian dance, music, food, arts and crafts. As in previous years, the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) participated in the festival with a display of books, Bibles and other literature presenting the work of the AMAA. Mr. Dikran Youmshakian, office Manager of AMAA, was also available to speak about the AMAA's work in Armenia to the public. This year, the festival, which was attended by thousands of local residents and Armenians from neighboring towns, will benefit schools and orphan care programs in Gumri. □



**The AMAA table at the Alexandria-Gumri Festival.**

According to a study by the UN Development Program, the living standards of most Armenians have deteriorated over the last few years and the gap between rich and poor was widened, the Armenian news agency Armenpress reported.

UNDP research found that 20 per cent of the most well-off families in Yerevan receive 63 per cent of all income while the poorest families get only 4.7 per cent of all income, the agency said.

According to UN calculations, CIS citizens receiving less than 4 dollars a day or 120 dollars a month are considered to be poor.

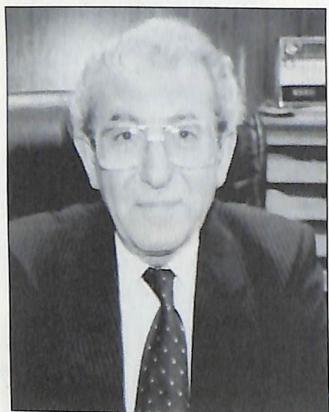
The average monthly salary in Armenia is 27 dollars.



## Հայերէն Բաժին

### Տէրը կը Ղրկէ, Մեռք կ'երթանք

Վեր. Յովհաննէս Ն. Գարենան



**Ամերիկայի Հայ Աւետարանչական Ընկերակցութիւնը** պշխարհի Հայ Աւետարանաւական եկեղեցին է: Եկեղեցին ուխտեալ հաւատացեալներու խումբն է: Քրիստոսի մարմինը: Ուրեմն, եկեղեցին ալ կը դրկուի, եւ եկեղեցին ալ կ'երթայ:

Ի՞նչպէս կարելի է այս: Աւետարանչականին պաշտպան կանգնելով, անոր համար աղօթելով, անոր օժանդակելով, անոր ծախքերուն մասնակցելով, եկեղեցին եւ անոր ժողովուրդը միախոնարութիւնը ըրած կ'ըլլան եւ իրենք ալ գացած կ'ըլլան:

Հայրը զրկեց, Տէր Յիսուսը, Տէր Յիսուս կը զրկէ մեզ: Մենք ալ կ'երթանք Աւետարանչականին միջոցով: □

Խոյանքներուն եւ նուաճումներուն:

\* \* \*

Ուրեմն, ի՞նչ է եկեղեցին միախոնարական առաքելութեան դադախարական հիմը, ի՞նչ է անոր աւետարանչական պարտականութեան բնոյթը եւ ի՞նչ է մեր ընելիքը:

Նախ, քիչ մը ասուածաբանութիւն: Քրիստոնէական հասկացողութեամբ, առաջին միախոնարն է Քրիստոս, եւ միախոնարական առաջին «ընկերութիւն» է Սուրբ Երրորդութիւնը: Եւ այս՝ շատ ալ ուրախ արարք մը չէ ինքնին: Այսինքն՝ Տէր Յիսուս աշխարհ դրկուեցաւ ո՛չ թէ գուարթ շրջապտոյափ մը, հապա՝ պարտադրաբար՝ վտանգաւոր առաքելութեան մը: Աստուծմէ հեռացած, չար եւ ապստամբ մարդկութիւնը զգաստութեան ու ապաշխարութեան հրասիրելու: Ան վտանգը կը բացատրէ Մշակներուն Առակով (Մարկոս 12, 1-11): Առաջին Միախոնարին առաքելութիւնը կը վերջանար խաչով ու ձախողութեամբ, եթէ Աստուծ չյարուցանէր Զայն մեռելներէն....

\* \* \*

Քիչ մըն ալ գործնական նկատումներ: Չուկաս 4, 19-19 համարներով, Տէր Յիսուս կը նկարագրէ իր միախոնարական գործին բնոյթը, որ կը բաժնուի երեք մարզի- 1) Քարոզել աւետարանը, այսինքն՝ փրկութեան բարի լուրը, ընդունելի տարին, ինչպէս նաեւ ազատութիւն եւ տեսողութիւն գերիներուն ու կոյցերուն: 2) Բուժել հոգեկան ու մարմնական հիւանդները. եւ 3) Ազատել հարստահարութեան անմեղ գոհերը:

Իբր միախոնարական ընկերակցութիւն մը, Աւետարանչականը կը հետեւի Տէրոջ քայլերուն: Ան կ'երթայ: Կը քաջալերէ Աւետարանին քարոզութիւնը, դասստիարակութիւնը, ընկերային ծառայութիւնը, ջատագովելով մարմնական ու հոգեկան առողջութիւնը: Այս ըսելով, Աւետարանչականը հաւատարիմ կ'ըլլայ Տէրոջ պատուէրին՝ «Ես ալ ձեզ կը զրկեմ...»: Եւ Աւետարանչականը կ'երթայ, քարոզելու, բուժելու եւ ազատելու....

\* \* \*

Հապա մեր ընելի՞քը... Ուխտ: Միախոնարութիւնը քանի մը

ընտրուած հոգիներու գործը չէ միայն: ամբողջ Եկեղեցիին գործն է: Եկեղեցին ուխտեալ հաւատացեալներու խումբն է: Քրիստոսի մարմինը: Ուրեմն, եկեղեցին ալ կը դրկուի, եւ եկեղեցին ալ կ'երթայ:

Ի՞նչպէս կարելի է այս: Աւետարանչականին պաշտպան կանգնելով, անոր համար աղօթելով, անոր օժանդակելով, անոր ծախքերուն մասնակցելով, եկեղեցին եւ անոր ժողովուրդը միախոնարութիւնը ըրած կ'ըլլան եւ իրենք ալ գացած կ'ըլլան:

Հայրը զրկեց, Տէր Յիսուսը, Տէր Յիսուս կը զրկէ մեզ: Մենք ալ կ'երթանք Աւետարանչականին միջոցով: □

### ՎԵՐ. Մ. ԳԱՐԱԿԻԶՕԶԵՍՆ

### ՆԱԽԱԳԱՀ Մ.Ա.Հ.Ա.Ե. ՄԻՌԻԹԵԱՆ



**Մերձաւոր Արեւելքի Հայ Աւետարանական Եկեղեցիներու Միութեան 55-րդ Համաժողովը** (6-9 Սեպտ. 1998, Պէյրութ), իր կայացուցած բազմաթիւ որոշումներով, հանգրուանային նշանակութիւն ունեցաւ Միութեան ապրեգրութեան մէջ: Այս համաժողովին նաեւ, երբ Միութեան նախագահ Վեր. Յովհաննէս Գարմեան՝ տարիքի բերումով հանգստեան կը կոչուէր իր պաշտօնէնին, Համաժողով Միութեան նախագահի կոչուէր կը կոչուէր իր պաշտօնէնին, Համաժողովը Վերաբերութիւնը կ'ըլլայ Տէրոջ պատուէրին (Նոր Ամանու): Հովուական պաշտօնը:

Վեր. Գարակիզօքեան ձեռնադրուած է 1987-ին: Իր հովուական ծառայութեան զուգահեռ, ան իր ծառայութիւնը բերած է Միութեան եւ Համայնքի տարրեր ժողովներուն:

Վեր. Գարակիզօքեան անդամ է Մերձաւոր Արեւելքի Աստուածաբանական ձեմարանի Հոգաբարձութեան, Եկեղեցիներու Համաշխարհային Խորհուրդի Մասնայութեան բաժնեկցութեան Յանձնաժողովին եւ նախագահը Քրիստոնէական Գործ Արեւելքի մէջ Ընկերակցութեան:

Վեր. Մ. Գարակիզօքեան ամուսնացած է Մեղա Մելքոնեանի հետ, որոնք ունին երկու մանչ եւ մէկ աղջիկ զաւակներ:

### Mary Karakashian Boyadjian

Mary Karakashian Boyadjian was one of twins born in Antioch (Musa Dagh) around 1906. Her exact date of birth is unknown as she was orphaned at an early age and the documents kept in Bibles and churches were destroyed by the Turks.



She appreciated beauty in nature and loved to arrange flowers and watch the birds. She loved her Lord and Creator, enjoyed Bible Study and never tired from reading her Bible, especially the Psalms. Mary and her husband were married for 54 years. They moved to New Jersey after his retirement in 1974 to be close to their children. She survived her husband by 14 years. In her latter years, she failed physically and mentally. Her last 3 1/2 years were spent at the Armenian Home in Emerson where she passed on to be with the Lord on November 24, 1998.

During the 1915-18 massacre of Armenians by the Turks, she was a "hidden child" with an Arab Moslem family who treated her very kindly. To help her blend into her new environment, they changed her name from Cima to Nariman and told her to respond, "bilmehm," (Turkish for "I don't know") to all questioners.

After the war, her older sister, Zarouhi, located her and brought her to a Catholic convent in Lebanon, where the nuns immediately changed her name to Mary. The two sisters remained there until they were summoned to join their two brothers in Jerusalem. The boys had been brought there from the Suez refugee camps in Egypt by an Anglican Missionary, the headmaster of St. George's School. Mary was enrolled as a nursing student at the English Government Hospital. She absolutely loved that vocation and rendered her services wherever needed.

While she was a student, Haroutune Boyadjian, a friend and fellow-student of her brothers, volunteered to tutor her in English. They were married in 1930 and lived in Jerusalem until 1960, always affiliated with the Anglican Bishopric where her husband Haroutune, having graduated from St. George's School, had become a teacher at the same school. After the 1948 Arab-Israel war, he was named the institution's first non-British headmaster. Mary, who was renowned for her hospitality, served as the school's nurse and housekeeper.

The Lord played a vital role in Vergine's life. At that time, the family was forced to move into temporary quarters on school premises, as their house was in no-man's-land and consequently in the line of fire between the two factions. The first truce signed in 1948 between Arabs and Jews was signed in their living room.

In 1960, they emigrated to the U.S. and settled in West Newton, MA, at the Fessenden School, where her husband was a boarding master. Mary was a housemother to the boys. She comforted and mothered many a homesick lad. They loved the children and both adapted to life in the U.S. She passed her driver's exam on her first try. "Mummy," as her children called her, was a most devoted, loving and caring mother and grandmother

School and led Bible studies. For years, she taught French on a volunteer basis at the Central High School. In fact, some of the present Evangelical ministers in the USA have been her students.

The devoted couple were very active in community affairs and utilized their energies and financial resources to make "Kchag" (a summer camp in Lebanon) a reality. They were instrumental in founding the Undernourished Children's Summer Project. The first year, Vergine volunteered to do all the cooking for the children and was a loving mother to all.

They were staunch supporters of AMAA and donated their entire estate of over \$1,000,000 as a trust fund, the income of which supports various worthy mission programs.

The Badeers immigrated to Fresno in 1982, where Vergine continued to raise money for "Chanasser" and the Undernourished Children's camp. Their home was always open to the lonely, needy and orphaned. Vergine received all with her beautiful, contagious smile which she retained until the end of her life.

Vergine's health began to deteriorate after her husband's death in 1993. She was invited to stay in New Jersey with her brother Edward's family but she opted to live in the Ararat Home in Los Angeles.

On February 20, 1999, Vergine went peacefully to be with her loved ones and her Lord, whom she served faithfully and lovingly. Funeral services were conducted by Reverends Barkev Darakjian and Ron Tovmassian on February 24 at the Church of the Hill in the Forest Lawn Cemetery in Hollywood Hills.

We thank God for her life, which reflected her Christian beliefs as she touched countless lives and was an inspiration to many. □

### Vergine Badeer

Vergine Badeer, the second of four children, was born in Aleppo, Syria on January 29, 1913, to Shemavon and Elizabeth Janjigian. The family was one of the founding members of the Armenian Emmanuel Church, in Aleppo. Vergine graduated with honors from the French College of Immaculate Conception in Aleppo and taught French at the Emmanuel and Bethel Schools.



The Lord played a vital role in Vergine's life. At a young age, she was an active church member, teaching Sunday School and leading Bible studies. She used her writing skills to contribute regularly to "Chanasser", a monthly publication.

In May 1941, she and Augustine Badeer were married. They moved to Jerusalem, Palestine, where her husband was an accountant with the British Army. Two years later, they were transferred to Beirut, Lebanon, which made both families very happy. There, they became members of the Ashrafieh Church,

Gladys was born in Harpert, Armenia, the youngest of Hagop and Aghavny Ajemian's three children. After the death of her father, Gladys came to the United States with her mother, brother Jack, and sister Grace (Zobian) in 1923.

Gladys A. Malian

Gladys A. Malian, beloved wife of the late Arthur M. Malian, and a loving mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother, died at home on Christmas Day, 1998, with her children by her side. This sweet, gentle and loving woman was called home by our Lord in her 86th year of life.

Gladys was born in Harpert, Armenia, the youngest of Hagop and Aghavny Ajemian's three children. After the death of her father, Gladys came to the United States with her mother, brother Jack, and sister Grace (Zobian) in 1923.



## ORPHANS TO BE REMEMBERED WITH A CHARITY GOLF OUTING

Following up on a very successful golf fundraiser last year, the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) is organizing its 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Charity Golf Outing to raise funds and awareness for its **Orphan/Child Care Program in Armenia**. The Golf Outing is scheduled for **August 16<sup>th</sup>** at the Hackensack Golf Club in Oradell, New Jersey. Over 100 golfers enjoyed the First Annual Golf Outing, and many more are anticipated to participate in this year's event. We are very thankful that Insignia/ESG, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Hekemian, and Albert A. Kapigian/Salomon Smith Barney, our three corporate sponsors will be supporting our efforts for a second year.

Yes, I will participate in AMAA's Charity Golf Outing to support orphans and needy children in Armenia.

I can not attend AMAA's Charity Golf Outing, but would like to support the orphans and the needy children in Armenia. Enclosed is my gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

(Make tax-deductible check payable to AMAA-Orphane Care)

Although last year's outing was a major success for a first-time event, we expect this year's to be even better. "Save the Date" of August 16<sup>th</sup> for this fun and charity event. Look for further details in the AMAA News and other mailings in the coming months.

Those interested in supporting AMAA's Orphan and Child Care Services by attending the outing or by giving a donation or making a sponsorship contribution, may contact Peyton Kapigian at (914) 365-1864 or send their checks payable to "AMAA-Orphan Care" to the Armenian Missionary Association of America, Inc., 31 West Century Road, Paramus, NJ 07652.

Armenian Missionary Association of America  
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